CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION:

For a long time twentieth century man has been haunted by the spectres of despair, insecurity and fear arising out of moral confusion and metaphysical uncertainty. As a result of obstreperous secularisation of life man has been reduced to atomistic insignificance, which has prevented any affirmation of the greatness of the human soul. Living under conditions of total deracination and alienation human existence has lost the traditional sense of human purpose and destiny. Man has, as a result of the triumph of mechanical material civilisation, become incapable of responding appropriately to the challenges life has thrown. Witness, for example Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, Joseph Wood Krutch's *The Modern Temper* and George Steiner's *The Death of Tragedy*. These writers have eloquently delivered magisterial judgements stating that modern(1) life has become increasingly characterised by industrialized regimentation and by the supremacy of scientific philosophy that interprets man as the inescapable victim of determinism.

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(1) I shall be using the words 'modern', 'modernism', 'modernity' and 'modernist' as terms of critical placement and judgement. What we call modern is being distinguished from the merely contemporary; because the contemporary as a term of neutral reference refers to time and the modern refers to sensibility and style.
Introduction

There is an obsessive erosion of moral and spiritual sanctions in the life of man, who has refused to believe in the reality of an invisible world. No law of justice, human or divine, reigns supreme. For him there is no life after death. He has, indeed, entered upon a period of human history in which the image of God is entirely fading away from the minds of men and any religion which includes the idea of a transcendent God has become irrelevant or obsolescent except as a form of escapism for the ignorant, the faint-hearted and the obscurantist. 'On or about December 1910 human nature changed'. (2) This is a vivid hyperbole through which Virginia Woolf meant to suggest that there is a frightening discontinuity between the traditional past and the shaken present. The usual morality becomes counterfeit, taste, a genteel indulgence and tradition, a wearisome fetter. Regarding doubt as a form of health the modernist culture mockingly suspends all accredited values, strips man of his systems of belief and ideal and proposes a uniquely modern style of salvation -- a salvation by, of, and for the self. This is an extreme form of subjectivity with filial dependence on romanticism, but declaring itself as an inflation of the self, a transcendental and orgiastic

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aggrandizement of matter and event on behalf of personal vitality. This kind of solipsism has been expressed by the German poet Gottfried Benn when he writes that "there is no outer reality, there is only human consciousness, constantly building, modifying, rebuilding new worlds out of its own creativity". (3)

Behind all these manifestations of confusion and uncertainty lurks a deep sense of historical impasse based on the assumption that something about the experience of this age is unique and catastrophic. The novelist Herman Hesse has spoken about "a whole generation caught ... between two ages, two modes of life, with the consequence that it loses all power to understand itself and has no standards, no security, no simple acquiescence." (4) To worsen the situation there is a more profound problem -- the problem of inability to arrive at a commonly accepted metaphysical picture of man. To Freud man is a biological phenomenon, a prey to instinctual desires. To Marxists he is the outcome of economic and social forces. Then a rationalistic picture of man derived partly from the liberal laissez-faire tradition rests upon an assumed harmony among men's varying rational desires, which reflect the pre-established harmonies to be found in nature. But, a pessimistic scientific humanism sees man with his aspirations and

(3) Gottfried Benn: Selected Writings, translated from German and edited by E.B. Ashton (Baron Boyar's, London, 1976), p. 42.

hopes as the outcome of chance collocations of atoms.

All of this may be true or not, but modernist writers, artists and composers like Joyce, Kafka, Picasso and Schoenberg have apparently worked on the tacit assumption that it is true. The disconcerting fact is that the modernist sensibility has posited a blockage, if not an end, to history -- some kind of an apocalyptic cul-de-sac in which both teleological end and secular progress are called into question. Indeed, man is mired in the mass, in the machine, in the city, in his loss of faith, in the hopelessness of a life without anterior intention or terminal value.

Current theorizing in philosophy or ethics has failed to remove or lessen these uncertainties. In these the tendencies are on the whole, anti-metaphysical. Philosophy has ceased to build systems and has become linguistic and analytical, showing a growing concern with questions of technique. Quite early in this century Bradley's absolute idealism began to give way to the realism of Russell and Moore. Along with this the aridities of logical atomism and logical positivism have completely repudiated the claims of metaphysics. The physical scientists have given up their claim to depict reality as something independent of the observer's position and of the conceptual system adopted to interprete it. Further, moral philosophers have failed to
formulate schemes of human betterment from axioms within a postulational system, and to bolster up existing systems by similar means. There is an atmosphere of deliquescence and obsolescence. Everyone has played his part in this gradual dissolution of authority and certainty. Intimations of such chaos and multiplicity was expressed by Henry Adams when he spoke of the final triumph of the Dynamo over the Virgin. A more relevant diagnosis seems to be that implicit in F.R. Leavis's remark:

It is as if society, in so complicating and extending the machinery of organization has lost intelligence, memory, and moral purpose. (5)

(II)

But human beings suffer as excruciatingly as they did in Athens in the fifth century before Christ, though, as heirs of the Age of Enlightenment, they view their suffering from a radically different philosophical perspective. They are intensely aware of the ineffectuality of all temporal and historical remedies for their terrible burden of suffering. They realise that in ultimate matters science and reason cannot help them to solve the riddle of existence. They have reached a point where they perceive

(5) F.R. Leavis: Mass Civilization and minority Culture (Cambridge University Press, 1930), p. 27.
that, when the chips are down, the universe fails to conform to the dictates of the heart or of the mind. This crisis in the human condition has been described in different ways in the writings of Joyce, Kafka, Conrad, Hemingway, Strindberg and Thomas Mann. In the absence of the affirmation of any principle of moral and spiritual transcendence in a drama of unjustified and unrelieved suffering writers like Malraux, Camus and Sartre have projected an existential decision to abide by those values which man himself has chosen. Literary nihilism, which is defiantly secular has depicted an Angst echoing the emotional despair of our times and has affirmed only the necessity for revolt against the human condition.

Nihilism is a term not only wide-ranging in reference but heavily charged with historical emotion. It signified at least a consciously affirmed and accepted loss of belief in transcendent imperatives and secular values as guides to moral conduct, together with a feeling that there is no meaning resident in human existence. It was first and most powerfully foreshadowed by Dostoevsky, who tried to suggest that there was nothing to believe in but the senses, which exhausted themselves rapidly and that God was impossible but that all was
impossible without Him. He and, later on, Nietzsche felt the intrinsic connection between nihilism as doctrine and nihilism as experience of loss — a loss of connection with the sources of life. Recognizing this, Dostoevsky tried to frighten the atheist both within himself and within his contemporaries by saying that once God was denied, everything — everything terrible — had become possible. Nietzsche answered by declaring that from the moment man lost belief in God he became responsible for everything alive, born of suffering, and was condemned to suffer for life. Thus, for the nihilists, and later on for the existentialists, a confrontation with the nihilist void became the major premise of human recovery.

However, inspite of the death of God and inspite of the terror of meaninglessness and eternal death haunting the modern mind, it has refused to die. Heroically the modern sensibility struggles for human renewal, for eternal renewal, and keeps searching for ways to secure its own end. In the midst of its multiplicity and brilliant confusion and its commitment to an aesthetic of endless renewal, 'isolation' and 'relationship' within what has been considered a decaying moral order, are found to be the two basic themes of modern literature. But these two subjects are not exclusively the basic concerns of literature only. Ever since the dawn of consciousness man has been subject to the concomitant
desires for individuation and for union. These are the desire to preserve and develop his individual identity, and the desire to merge himself with something greater than and outside himself to escape the burden of self-hood by identifying himself with some power that would duplicate or return him to the undifferentiated state from which his awakened consciousness wrenched him. These conflicting needs have constituted the basic problem in man's relationship with his fellow men, his universe, and his god. This is, ultimately, a religious or spiritual problem which has troubled many ages, particularly the present one, for which the problem is characterised by a peculiar sense of urgency. The crux of the modern situation is that with all the unprecedented progress in self-consciousness characterising the development of the modern mind man has felt a burdensome sense of isolation or alienation at a time when, for various reasons, his traditional faith has receded giving rise to an unbearable condition of moral paralysis, spiritual muteness or frozen spiritual misery.

Stating the problem in a few words, modern man is threatened by a world created by himself. He is faced with the conversion of mind to naturalism, a dogmatic secularism and an opposition to any belief in the transcendent. But confronted with the question of meaning,
he is summoned to rediscover and scrutinise the immutable and the permanent which constitute the dynamic, unifying aspect of life as well as the principle of differentiation. He is faced with the metaphysical question of the truth of religion while he encounters the empirical question of its effects on man and society, when religion is not necessarily theology and its doctrinal forms but the feelings, aspirations and acts of man as they relate to total reality. Yes, man is now confronted with his burden and his greatness:

He calleth to me, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? (Isaiah 21:11)

Perhaps the anguish in the human soul may be assuaged by an answer, by an attempt to strike along the path of the spirit for the assimilation of the person in God:

The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come. (Isaiah 21:12)

In keeping with the spirit of such lines from the scripture some men belonging to the problematic modern age, have inquired and returned with some answers. In response to the perplexing problems of this age some modern writers have done the job, perhaps with some success. Happily, the modern writer and the scientist agree at least to see life as process and flux, and to admit a degree of personal choice in the handling of experience. In such
Introduction

a complex and divided civilization where the claims of manifestations of modernism become increasingly insistent, the role of the great writers in whom intellect is suffused with emotion and emotion controlled by intelligence, points a way to a unity of being, a psychic wholeness and a fusion in which intuitive insight and moral control coalesce, and 'a real literary interest' becomes 'an interest in man, society, and civilization'. And, it is in the context of the complexities of the age referred to and of the views mentioned above that I bring in the subject of my thesis, T.S. Eliot and his interaction with the Christian tradition.

However, it is common knowledge that in this age the problem of belief has become exacerbated, sometimes to the point of dismissal. Weariness has set in, not merely with this or that belief, but with the whole idea of belief. Christianity has been found to be ineffectual in averting the tragic destiny that threatens to overwhelm all mankind. The Christian notion of man as the child of sin, belonging at once to the natural and to the transcendent world, and owning possibilities of salvation through the Grace of God -- a living being whose essence is free self-determination and whose sin is the wrong use of his freedom, retains only an echo of its former vitality. Religious controversy has no

longer vitally affected public issues. But, for the
Western civilization until the advent of Darwin, Christian
dogma supplied both an explanation for the Fall, the
separation from God, and a generally accepted formula for
the recovery of the lost Garden of Eden. But, in this
century, for the majority of Europeans, Camus has declared,
'faith is lost'. (7) Stephen Spender has expressed the same
idea when he says that the modern writer is faced 'by the
experience of all-pervading Present, which is a world
without belief'. (8)

But the atheist's existential decision to confront
nothingness with its frighteningly empty consequences by
constructing elaborate rational structures based on nothing-
ness is like whistling in the dark. There is, still, man
surrounded by his multifarious limitations in an incompre-
hensible universe. There is, still, the impenetrable mystery
cradling all of existence. One of the puzzled young persons

(7) Albert Camus: Resistance, Rebellion and Death
translated by Justin O'Brien (Alfred A. Knopf, New York,

(8) Stephen Spender: The Destructive Element: A Study of
Modern Writers and Beliefs, (Folcroft Library Editions,
in H.G.Wells's story, *The Babes in the Darkling Wood*

remarks:

At the back of all there surely has to be a credo, a fundamental statement, put in language which does not conflict with every reality we know about the world. We don't want to be put off with serpents and fig-leaves and sacrificial lamb. We want a creed in modern English, Sir. And we can't find it. (9)

These simple words give a vivid, if not, a very profound expression of the spiritual crisis of modern man. They reflect a deep ontological anxiety in human life. Again, in an article in the *Observer*, Sir Julian Huxley who has been called the arch-priest of scientific humanism wrote:

There remains the fundamental mystery of existence, notably the existence of the mind ... It remains true that many phenomena are charged with the magical quality of transcendent or even compulsive power over our minds and introduce us to realms beyond ordinary experience. They merit a special designation: for want of a better, I use the term 'divine', though this quality of divinity is not supernatural but 'transnatural'. This divinity is what man finds worthy of adoration, that which compels his awe. (10).

It is, indeed, impossible to deny the fact that this sense of the divine or the numinous is part of our experience. Questions with regard to its significance and


its validity have ceaselessly exercised our minds. It is certainly transnatural in the sense that it is immanent in our inner experience and in the phenomenal world. It may be more than that. It may also be transcendent, ultra- or supra-natural, i.e. outside or other than the time-space continuum of the phenomenal world. There is this failure to solve the irritating dichotomy of immanence and transcendence still dogging our life. But, living with a terrible burden of suffering in a world which has hailed the death of God, and where Nietzsche has shown gestures of Promethean defiance by spelling out all the metaphysical implications to be drawn from a God-abandoned world, some writers and thinkers have taken a leap into faith, perhaps, to escape the consequences of dread and despair induced by the conditions of nihilistic absurdity.

( III )

Among those intensely aware of and protesting strongly against the modern condition is the author of The Waste Land, a title which has become almost a by-word for both the sterility of the modern world, and a gesture of protest against it. T.S. Eliot was so bitterly aware of the emptiness of modern life, the contradictions of its ideals, and the futility of its hopes, that he was desperately searching for some direction, some abiding place of peace and faith, and some positive destiny. At
first he found a kind of refuge in his art, even though that art celebrated uncertainty, unrest and some kind of abstraction from reality. But he had to go somewhere.

When many of his contemporaries, some of whom were more prolific and equally gifted, have been fixed in their complacent hedonism or despair, the poet of *The Waste Land* was evidently going somewhere. It was certain that he would not stick at that point; and one had to watch him to see what he would do. Harold Nicolson, one of his contemporaries nurtured in the Victorian tradition, wrote:

In the years after the First World War we were shattered by the futility of so much effort, the wastage of such courage, the disappointment of so many hopes. Eliot became the seer who understood and gave expression to our emptiness. Although he echoed our despair, he had small sympathy with hopelessness ...

... He told us that we should not surrender to the agony of existence, but that 'for us there is only the trying'. Although our explanations of life could never be anything more than 'hints and guesses', yet there did exist such positives as thought, discipline and action. (11)

This was true. Eliot lived, suffered and negotiated a journey across the Waste Land with his eyes firmly fixed on the destination. Finally his ceaseless attempts to find an answer to and escape from the modern Waste Land resulted in his persistent pursuit for tradition, which ultimately

emerged as a nostalgia and a quest for the Christian tradition. We can applaud this desire to formulate a consistent central position which, he believed, would offer strength and permanence, even though some may regret the nature of the ideals and institutions which he invoked.

T.S.Eliot belonged to an agonizing period of transition when conflicting tendencies of varying strength manifested themselves in society under a civilization which comprehended great variety and complexity. It was a time governed by a theory of progress to which the key was a growing respect for individual freedom, making for democracy in politics, and liberalism with a strong affinity to Protestantism in thought. It was an age of dissociation and fragmentation representing a degeneration of an ideal of European community which was based on a unified European sensibility symbolised by the cultural synthesis of the age of Dante when Thomistic Catholicism was the dominant voice of a theocentric society. In the midst of these fragments, this chaos and confusion, Eliot fought for a new attitude of mind and a new sensibility. Joyce, Yeats, Valery, Proust, Mallarme and Dostoevsky were still alive. But the society engrossed in materialistic pursuits had no time for, or interest in the arts as revelations of disturbing truths, and preferred
Introduction

- 16 -

art as entertainment, ornament or decoration to well-satisfied lives. Only the serious writers and thinkers were disturbed by intimations of chaos, discontent, anxiety and unrest. In 1896 Henry James commented to A.C. Benson: 'I have the imagination of disaster -- and see life as ferocious and sinister'. (12) It was in such a world that T.S. Eliot appeared as a writer and thinker postulating the need for tradition or the Christian tradition in the febrile age's attempt for human recovery or renewal.

But Eliot was not the only or the prime influence at work to draw intellectuals in the direction of Christianity. In society in general the rise of totalitarian regimes released forces to work in the religious direction. Winston Churchill's speeches began to reflect a religious perspective. When he became Prime Minister in May 1940 the threat facing the nation included 'the outrage of our nation and our altar'. (13) Even Bertrand Russell admitted once to a Fabian gathering that he was 'almost persuaded to become a Christian' by Hitler's Fascism. (14) As a matter of fact, Christianity, especially


in its more extreme Catholic forms, was revived by men like Chesterton, Ford Madox Ford, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. Many disillusioned communists turned to the Catholic church, and Marxism as a serious force among intellectuals could not survive the post-war political behaviour of Russia, as was seen in the case of Orwell and Gide. John Middleton Murry, at different times Communist and pacifist advocated an ascetic social theory and hovered over the brink of Christian orthodoxy when he was a member of a group of Christian thinkers called the Moot. Auden became a Christian at the end of the thirties, and Michael Roberts, at one time in the van of the socialist literary movement, also came over to Eliot's side with his study of T.E. Hulme. The difference in the case of Eliot was that in the literary field he acted as a pole and had his own followers like Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom, who defended the faith and made the interest in religion spread among men who had not joined the church.

T.S. Eliot's response to the fragmentation and chaos of his age was an essentially moral and spiritual one. After the deadening blow that modern science and scientific philosophy dealt to conventional religion, to man's concept of a purposive universe and his place in it, and the consequent regression from an early-Victorian optimism to
a twentieth-century despair, Eliot made heroic attempts for human recovery and renewal through Christian integration. Possessing a comprehensive sense of his own age, and a new and terrifying honesty and sincerity arising out of the need for authentic response, in a world too frightened to be honest, he gave a clarion call for intense moral and spiritual struggle. For Eliot the answer for the deracina-
tion and alienation of modern life was a religious one. In 1931 he wrote:

The world is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail, but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time; so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the world from suicide.

(‘Thoughts after Lambeth’ in Selected Essays, p. 387)

These words throw significant light on Eliot’s aim in his works. Because, having protested the modern Waste Land, Eliot set about ‘redeeming the time’, attempting ceaselessly, through his poetry, prose and plays, to present ideas — ideas which became more and more plainly Christian as his life and career progressed — in a form acceptable to ‘civilized but non-Christian mentality’. This attempt finally emerges as a pattern, — a positive pattern of unremitting quest for the Christian tradition. The final concept involves most, if not all, of the major ideas of
Introduction

Eliot. It will be found that his ideas about tradition, order, reality, art and language, expressed in both his prose and poetry, are repeated and extended until all are integrated in his supreme concern for the Christian tradition. Man's intuitive reasoning and wisdom leads towards and is completed by religious comprehension. In Eliot the attempt for artistic redemption raises urgent moral and religious problems and his art ultimately becomes a kind of spiritual exercise.

(IV)

The aim of my thesis is to study the works of Eliot -- his poems, plays, literary criticism and prose essays -- to find out how far his response to the Christian tradition has constituted a significant element of his works. This investigation involves a close and careful study of all his works against a controversial background of the interaction of the Christian tradition and the modern conditions. This problem has been touched upon by almost all the major critics of Eliot. But, in the midst of the proliferating commentaries on Eliot no one has gone for an exhaustive critical assessment of his Christianity, which has remained a constant and specific element of his life and his art.
Introduction

Since the appearance of *The Sacred Wood* in 1920 and *The Waste Land* in 1922 when Eliot's critical and poetic careers converged publicly, he has been a favourite subject of heated and vigorous contention among the literary critics. The voices that have spoken on Eliot are representative of the modern age in its literary and intellectual aspects, and they show the reaction of the age to its most influential poet and critic. Critical studies on Eliot are so numerous that I can do no more than mention a few important titles. In the beginning there was an original debate about the importance of Eliot's poetry conducted by Conrad Aiken, Ezra Pound, E.M. Forster, Edmund Wilson, Richards, Leavis and Matthiessen. Matthiessen's book, *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot*, which is probably the best introduction to Eliot's work, provides much valuable information about his poetry and his critical position. While critics like Richard Aldington, Leavis, Ross Williamson, and Matthiessen spoke of the wholeness and unity of Eliot by using his criticism in support of his poetry, there were others like Louis Grudin, Wyndham Lewis, Frank Swinnerton, Ransom, Winters and Savage, who would not allow that the criticism was free from contradictions and inconsistencies.

After this some important critics took over the main judgements of the initial critical debate, and concentrated on expounding and explaining whatever seemed to
require it. Elizabeth Drew's *T.S.Eliot: The Design of His Poetry*, Helen Gardner's *The Art of T.S.Eliot*, D.F.S. Maxwell's *The Poetry of T.S.Eliot*, George Williamson's *A Reader's Guide to T.S.Eliot* and Hugh Kenner's *The invisible Poet*, are the results of this assimilative work. These works suffer from a general weakness resulting from the writers' failure to reconsider the close relationship alleged to exist between Eliot's poetry and his social and cultural diagnoses. There are also books written at a more utilitarian level. Grover Smith's *T.S.Eliot's Poetry and Plays* is an exhaustively informative work about the allusions, references and contexts of Eliot's poems and plays. There is a rich store of biographical and contextual information in Herbert Howarth's *Notes on some Figures behind T.S. Eliot*.  


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(15) For biographical and contextual informations on Eliot I am indebted to Herbert Howarth, Conrad Aiken, Frank Morley, Richards, Herbert Read, Kristian Smidt, Richard Aldington, Fener Muhn, Donald Hall, Allesandro Felligrine and Leslie Paul.
before and after the war.

There are several hostile critics who have tried to attack Eliot's general artistic, critical, social and religious positions. In the late thirties two American writers, John Crowe Ransom and Yvor Winters tried very persistently to chisel away at Eliot's eminence. In a lengthy essay in *The New Criticism* Ransom attacked Eliot's theory of poetry stated in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' as being highly unmanageable. Regarding Eliot's religious beliefs, he feared that the poet proposed to have no commerce with the world. In his book *The Anatomy of Nonsense* Yvor Winters showed his annoyance with various problems in Eliot like his self-contradiction, his concept of tradition and the lack of rational coherence in his poems which looked like reveries. Eliot's general position -- expatriate, traditional, aristocratic and Anglo-Catholic -- has been questioned by several critics. Dixon Weetor, Van Wyck Brooks, Ferner Nuhn and S.E.Hyman have found Eliot's concept of tradition artificial, negative and egotistical. David Daiches and D.S.Savage have also seen something typically American, naive and artificial in Eliot's views on culture and tradition. Then, writers of the political left like Malcolm Cowley, John Strachey and Harold J.Laski have rejected his traditionalism as being reactionary, though they have appreciated the astuteness and brilliance of his literary accomplishments. Russell Hope Robbins in his book, *The T.S.Eliot Myth* has made a serious attack on
Eliot describing him as a poet of minor achievement, emotionally sterile, and with a mind coarsened by snobbery and constricted by bigotry. Another critic, J.R. Harrison has described Eliot as a member of anti-democratic intelligentsia and charged him with Fascist sympathy and antisemitism.

Now, for general criticism of the works of Eliot, the situation has changed. Contrasting strikingly with the welter of irate and impatient differences of opinion following the first appearance of The Waste Land, interpretations and analysis of his poems and plays have become more specialized and more strictly in the academic vein. Extensive and detailed studies of individual poems and plays like that of The Waste Land by Cleanth Brooks, that of Ash-Wednesday by Allen Tate, that of Four Quarters by Raymond Preston or by Helen Gardner, and that of Murder in the Cathedral by Louis L. Martz, are significant in the sense that they combine close studies of the texts with critical appraisals and interpretations. In addition to these, several collections of essays on Eliot and his works have appeared. The volumes edited by March and Tambimuttu, by B. Rajan, by Leonard Unger, by Allen Tate, by Hugh Kenner and by Graham Martin contain useful representative opinions of the age on Eliot and his works. It must be obvious that I have not given an exhaustive report of all the critical works on Eliot. Books and articles on Eliot have always been coming out in different parts of the world. Even after the
Introduction - 25 -

Facsimile publication of Eliot's manuscripts for The Waste Land in 1972, some important works have appeared. Eliot in His Time, a collection of essays on Eliot edited by Walton Litz examines the writer from fresh critical perspectives. T.S. Eliot Between Two Worlds by David Ward examines Eliot's eclectic approach to the concept of tradition and the way in which his education and experience has shaped his most important interests. In his book, Eliot, published in 1975, Stephen Spender has highlighted the way in which Eliot brought into consciousness, and into confrontation with one another, the spiritually negative contemporary world and the spiritually positive past tradition. Again in Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet (1979) A.D. Moody has made a comprehensive and illuminating analysis of Eliot's writings with a deeply perceptive emphasis on the nature, purpose and meaning of his poetry.

In this brief survey my intention has been to indicate what impressed me as the most important opinions on Eliot, and to present a picture in which the intrinsically valuable is balanced by the significantly representative. My choice has also been determined by the requirements of relevance for the problem to be explored in my thesis. The Christian element in the life
and works of Eliot has been at different times and in
different ways discussed by critics like John Crowe Ransom,
F.O. Matthiessen, Edmund Wilson, R.P. Blackmur, Amos Wilder,
Mario Praz, Waldo Frank, Leonard Unger, Louis L. Martz,
Kristian Smidt, Helen Gardner, Carol Smith, Vincent Buckley,
Joseph Chiari and David Ward etc. But most of the discussions
were more or less indirect, polemical, deprecatory or even
vituperative. I feel that the interaction between Eliot and
the Christian tradition has not been adequately studied,
leaving much to be desired. The perfunctory, the deprecatory,
or sometimes, apologetic attentions given to the problem has
led to serious gaps in the understanding of Eliot's develop-
ment in which the religious (Christian) centrality is the
most important element. I hope to be able to fill these gaps
by a close and careful study of Eliot's works -- poetry,
drama, criticism and prose essays.

But, the study of Eliot does not end with an
examination of his works only. Just as each of his poems
can be fully understood only in relation to the others and
to his plays and prose works, so his work as a whole has its
full meaning in the larger context of the mind lived in one
of the most brilliant but agonizing periods of our civiliza-
tion. I have respected and implicitly accepted Eliot's belief
that poetry does not exist in isolation from other forms of human activity. Though the poem arises out of the poet's lonely creative struggle, it also expresses the hopes and fears of the age in a more profound sense than that indicated by the callow demands for contemporary relevance. In this connection it can be said that Eliot lived a life of heroism on two planes. As a creative artist he courageously made poetry out of his personal sufferings, and as a man of letters and as a thinker he was constantly devoted to a life of the mind and civilized values. It is now possible to see the life and the work of Eliot as an achieved whole, a completed pattern.

In this thesis I have tried to concentrate on the Christian element in the works of Eliot and also to present the chief facts from Eliot's public life relevant to the specific aim of such a study. The approach, then, is partly biographical and partly exegetical. I start with the formative period of Eliot's life and art -- his family background, his education, his society, his readings and his philosophical propensities etc. and then proceed to an examination of his concept of tradition, which will ultimately emerge as the Christian tradition. Thereafter I examine his writings in chronological order with a view to discerning any possible evolution of his ideas in the Christian context. My emphasis will be on the literary expression and literary values of his Christian consciousness.